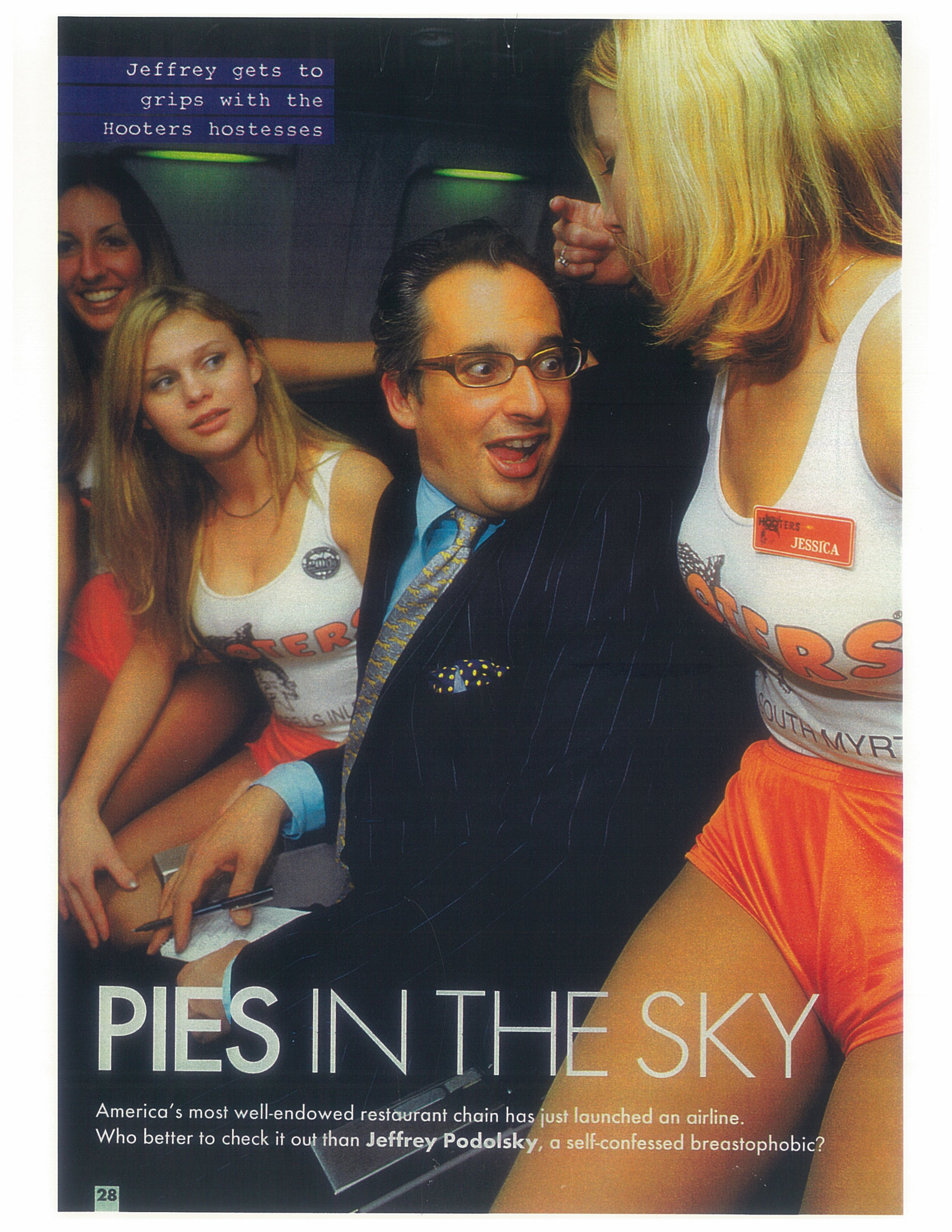


A photograph of Jeffrey Podolsky, a man with glasses and a dark pinstripe suit, sitting at a table. He is looking towards the camera with a surprised expression. He is surrounded by several women in Hooters uniforms, which consist of white tank tops with 'HOOTERS' and 'SOUTH MYRTLE BEACH' printed on them, and orange shorts. One woman in the foreground has a name tag that says 'JESSICA'. Another woman is leaning over him, and another is behind him. The background is dark with some green lighting.

Jeffrey gets to
grips with the
Hooters hostesses

PIES IN THE SKY

America's most well-endowed restaurant chain has just launched an airline. Who better to check it out than **Jeffrey Podolsky**, a self-confessed breastphobic?

have lived much of my life in mortal dread of women with big breasts, so it was with some trepidation that I booked a seat on the debut flight of Hooters Air. Hooters — a US restaurant chain known for its signature chicken wings, oh, and its busty waitresses — has just launched a new airline employing its scantily clad Hooters as hostesses.

For \$159 (about £100) each-way, the airline offers a round trip from New York to Myrtle Beach, South Carolina — aka the Redneck Riviera, an affordable playground for golf junkies.

Despite my anxiety, I couldn't resist the prospect of keeping abreast of the tabloid hunk Ben Affleck, who reportedly booked a stag-night flight aboard the world's raunchiest airline, only to have it nixed by his bride-to-be, J.Lo. The Latina lovely apparently went into conniptions when she learnt that Ben had set his sights on checking out the buxom trolley-dollies in their skimpy uniforms.

My own fiancée was more concerned that I might pass out at the sight of a flock of Hooters hostesses, specially trained in midair emergency procedures. But, like other intrepid explorers before me, I was determined to become a member of that elite flying fraternity — not the mile-high, screw-in-the-loo club, but an heir of sorts to those aviation pioneers Orville and Wilbur Wright. No matter what the psychological peril, I would claim my place in Hooters history.

Such an expedition would be fraught with danger. Ever since my university binge days, when I slept with a woman whose well-endowed assets threatened to short-circuit my oxygen intake, I've been plagued by nightmares of succumbing to a juggernaut of chesty *femmes fatales*. Among male friends, I shy away from nipple talk, and among women I simply shy away, looking them straight above the eye — which may well account for the brevity of our cocktail banter. Desperate, I phoned a couple of bosom buddies to make a clean breast of my mammary escapade and ask them to join me, but both wisely declined. I was on my own.

As I checked in at the Hooters gate, I was relieved to see that the Hooters hostesses were wearing nothing more inflaming than orange tracksuits. But by the time we boarded Hooters Air One, they had disrobed to reveal their uniforms, in all their scantiness. Our Hooter girls, two young blondes named Amber and Tritha, greeted us with a friendly "Hi, y'all!" to which a chorus of my fellow male passengers mumbled "sweet", "gnarly" and "astounding". The only note of dissent came from a gaggle of Southern females, who, pitying the girls, clucked "God bless". I confined my own comments to the lovely decor, taking special note of the comfy seats with extra legroom. When you lean back, they slide forward — unlike the gals, whose posteriors arched backward as they leant forward to mix and mingle.

"That's a fine-lookin' piece of ass," commented Roy Watkins, a 21-year-old tugboat worker from Myrtle Beach, when he wasn't shouting "I wanna vodka and tonic" while precariously leaning over his aisle seat. "My girl's gonna kick my butt, but you know what? I don't care a rat's ass." Nor did he seem to care if an airline named Hooters appeared on his tugboat expense account. He did, though, seem a tad jealous when Amber sold me her last remaining Hooters cap, lovingly signed "Breast wishes".

That was about as flirtatious as these wholesomely seductive gals got. It's all not-so-subtle innuendo — I've

"I'VE BEEN PLAGUED BY NIGHTMARES OF SUCCUMBING TO A JUGGERNAUT OF CHESTY FEMMES FATALES"

seen Park Avenue princesses in the latest Versace micro-mini flashing as much flesh, and I was astonishingly at ease during the whole trip. The girls were more reminiscent of American Beauty's Lolitaesque, all-American cheerleader than a lusty Pamela Anderson. "Any guy can be a pig," another Hooter named Heather later told me, rolling her eyes at the oft-repeated, boorish come-on "Are you on the menu?" "If they're willing to have a conversation without hitting on us,

that's cool. I can talk to people about anything. Last night, I learnt how to calculate a handicap."

On the ground, I hooked up with T-Bone Terry, an affable Myrtle Beach local who claimed the dubious distinction of "fixin' the best chicken bogs in town". We headed for the local Hooters restaurant, where, over chicken wings, T-Bone gave me the Hooters lowdown. "A Hooter's mammary glands play on the memory glands of what every man likes," he theorised, gnawing on his wings the way Albert Finney tore into a piece of mutton in Tom Jones. "They've become an American icon like the Barbie doll," he went on, before noting that most Hooters have such "nice sets because there ain't a whole lot of natural".

Not that the tourists seem to give a hoot about this. "From the moment a golfer leaves New York, he's interested in only one thing: tits and ass," T-Bone opined. "Then it's back to Wall Street to be Mr Stockbroker again."

All in all, my trip proved successful: I had mastered, to some extent, my inexplicable phobia of the *poitrine* and a round of medieval mini-golf had undoubtedly improved my game. I also learnt that nuclear-hot chicken wings can be cause for considerable flatulence. That evening's return home was, to my psychoanalyst's delight, a reverie come true: I snoozed all the way.

Once we had touched down, Amber drawled softly: "Why didn't y'all come on up and see us?" I looked her straight in the eye and told her how I had bogeyed the 15th hole with its demanding drawbridge. My flight to Hooterville had dispelled my breastphobia — at least while I was airborne. Back on terra firma, however, it would be another matter.

